miscreants were arrested in connection with the incidents.

KERALA: Some unidentified persons threw a bomb in Punalur on September 21. None was, however, injured in the incident and only a building got slightly damaged.

MIZORAM: On September 27, 1988, an accidental explosion took place at Aizwal and a grenade exploded when boys playing nearby tried to pull the lever of the grenade which was lying in a drain. 2 children were injured in the incident.

RAJASTHAN: A minor explosion took place in Ashoka Cinema Hall, Udaipur, on September 11, 1988, none was injured in the incident.

TAMIL NADU: A bomb was thrown near War Memorial in Madras city on September 19, 1988. None was injured.

TRIPURA: During a bandh organised by SFI|DYFI a bomb suspected to be a cracker exploded at Durai Shibbari (P. S. Kamalpur) on September 14 and one person was killed and another injured.

UTTAR PRADESH: An incident of bomb explosion took place at Allahabad on September 11 but none was injured in the incident.

WEST BENGAL: During the month 8 incidents of explosions took place in the State at Narayangarash (Midnapur—September 2), Barafkhana (Murshidabad—September 3), Mundakothi (Darjiling—September 6), Titagarh (September 13), Dubrajdighi, Titagarh, (2 incidents on September 13), Tegharia (North 24 Paraganas—September 28). In the incidents at Barafkhana, 3 persons were reported killed and one person each died at Titagarh and Tegharia due to the bomb explosions.

PUNJAB: In Punjab one incident of bomb explosion took place at Rajpura (September 3, district Patiala). In this incident one chiled was killed and 10 persons were injured.

CHANDIGARH: One bomb blast took place in Chandigarh during September, 1988, in which one person died.

**Decrease in forest cover**

867. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that of late the forest cover in the country has decreased from 16.89 per cent to 11 per cent recently;

(b) if so, what steps have since been taken to arrest the same;

(c) whether it is forbidden by law to replace forests with plantations of tea, cofee, spices, horticultural and medicinal plants and oil bearing crops; and

(d) if so, whether it is a fact that in many States like Punjab, Karnataka, etc. proposals have been cleared for non-forestry diversions?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) According to studies conducted by the Forest Survey of India with the help of satellite imagery, the extent of forest cover in the country for the years 1981—83 is estimated at 64.20 million hectares which is 19.52 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. Out of this 35.77 million hectares consists of good forest cover which is 10.88 per cent of the total geographical area.

(b) Steps taken to conserve forests are given in the statement attached. (*See* below)

(c) and (d) The forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 prohibits diversion of forest land for non-forest use, including plantation of tea, coffee, spices, horticultural and medicinal plants and oil bearing crops, without the

prior approval of the Central Government. Such diversion has been permitted in some cases in the past on the merits of each case.

**Statement**

*Steps taken to conserve forests*

1. Forest (Conservation) Act was enacted in 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.

2. A Centrally sponsored scheme has been started to help the States to develop infrastructure for enforcement of legal provisions for the protection of forests.

3. Alternative sources of energy are being developed to replace fuelwood in domestic and commercial sector.

4. Wood is being substituted by alternative materials in packaging, railway sleepers and building conssructions.

5. Import policy for forest products has been liberalised.

6. Fiscal incentives are given to industries for wood substitution.

7. Efforts are being made to conrtol shifting cultivation.

8. Guidelines have been issued to State Governments from time to time for protection of forests. Some of these guidelines are as follows:

(i) to avoid clear felling of natural forests and where such fellings are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to areas exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains.

(ii) to consider banning of fellings in the hills above 1000 metres, at least for some years.

(iii) to identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.

(iv) to set apart 4 per cent of the geographical area as protection areas like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserve etc.

**Dialogue with PLA of Manipur**

868. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur was declared illegal in 1981;

(b) whether a section of the PLA has indicated their desire that they are willing to lay down their arms if suitable forum is created for an affective dialogue with Government for the solution of basic problems of Manipur people; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur was declared unlawful in October, 1979 and since then the ban has been extended from time to time. The last notification declaring it as unlawful was issued on 26-10-87.

(b) and (c) The Government are not aware of any communication to this effect. The policy of the Government has been to deal firmly with activities of extremists groups, but if any such group is willing for a peaceful solution through negotiations it must fulfil two pre-conditions, viz., to accept the Constitution of India and to abjure violence.